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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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SWEETPOTATO WEEVIL CONTROL

NATURE OF THE PEST

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The sweetpotato weevil was introduced into the United States from the West Indies. The first infestation was found in Louisiana in 1875. The adult weevil is about one-fourth inch long. Its general conformation resembles that of a large ant. Infestations are spread by the shipment of sweet-potato plants, seed potatoes, and table potatoes from infested areas. Eggs are deposited in small holes, made by the female weevil, in the plant stems or directly in the potatoes.

CROPS AFFECTED

The sweetpotato is the only cultivated crop attacked by the sweetpotato weevil; however, it does attack and can develop in certain species of the morning glory.

DAMAGE AND ESTIMATED LOSSES

The sweetpotato weevil is the most destructive insect pest of sweetpotatoes. Damage is due to adult weevils feeding on the leaves, vines, and roots of the sweetpotato plant, and by larvae (grubs) feeding within the stems, roots, and potatoes. Sweetpotatoes cannot be grown economically in areas of weevil infestations without adequate control measures. Many instances of total crop destruction have been recorded. During 1953, estimated losses due to weevil attack in six parishes in Louisiana were \$1,750,000. Sweet-potato production in the United States, in 1953, totaled 33,974,000 bushels, valued at \$88,672,000. Sixty per cent of all sweetpotatoes are produced in the weevil-infested States, where the value of the crop is estimated at \$50,500,000.

CONTROL PROGRAM

The sweetpotato weevil control program is designed to locate and delimit infested areas, to eradicate weevils from selected areas, to suppress weevil populations in areas of heavy commercial sweetpotato production, and to prevent the spread of weevils from infested to non-infested areas.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

This program is authorized by the Plant Quarantine Act of 1912, as amended (7 U.S.C. 151-167) and the Organic Act of 1944, as amended (7 U.S.C. 147a).

July 7, 1954



